BLM NEWS

Montana Department of Environmental Quality

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BILLINGS -- A proposed wind farm project northwest of Glasgow will be explained at public meetings in Glasgow and Helena May 24 and 26.

Federal and state agencies responsible for conducting the environmental review for the proposed project are hosting the meetings and will be asking the public to identify issues and concerns to be addressed during the review.

Wind Hunter LLC, a wind energy development company, proposes to construct, operate and maintain a wind energy development in north-central Valley County, about 30 miles northwest of Glasgow. As proposed, the project, known as the Valley County Wind Energy Project, would develop up to 500 megawatts (MW) in phases and would include two parallel transmission lines running about 30 miles from the wind farm to electrical transmission lines south of the Milk River. The project would be constructed on private land, public lands managed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and State of Montana School Trust Lands.

The first meeting will be in Glasgow on Tues., May 24, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in the Glasgow Elks Lodge, 309 2nd Ave. S. The second meeting will be in Helena on Thurs., May 26, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in the Metcalf Building, 1520 E. 6th Ave., Room 111. The BLM, Western Area Power Administration (Western), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) are hosting the meetings. These federal and state agencies will collaborate on required environmental review processes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), and the Montana Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA).

There will be presentations by representatives from Wind Hunter and the BLM, Western, DEQ, and DNRC. Maps and other information will be provided for review and representatives from each agency will be available to discuss the project, answer questions and take comments.

Written comments can be submitted at the meetings or sent no later than June 24, 2005, to: BLM, Attn. Candace Meyer, 501 South 2nd St. E., HC 65, Box 5000, Malta, Mont. 59538-0047.

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Additional information about the project and the MFSA application is available for review on-line at: http://www.deq.state.mt.us/MFS/windhunter.asp, or by contacting BLM representatives Scott Powers, Project Manager, at (406) 896-5319 or John Fahlgren, Assistant Field Office Manger, BLM Glasgow Field Office at (406) 228-3757, or DEQ representative Tom Ring, Project Manager, at (406) 444-6785.

The project's proposed first phase would generate 50 MW of electricity using 33 wind turbines providing enough power for approximately 25,000 homes. A 69 kV transmission line also would be required for the first phase. Future capacity could be increased up to 500 MW with the addition of approximately 300 turbines, related wind farm infrastructure, a 230 kV transmission line, possibly a new substation about 10 miles west of Glasgow and additional upgrades to the transmission system.

Wind Hunter would initially install and operate three-bladed 1.5 MW wind turbines on tubular steel structures. The height of the turbines would range from 330 to 390 feet from the ground to the blade tip in its highest position, depending on the type and size of turbine selected. In the northern and central portions of the project area, the 69 kV and 230 kV transmission lines would use wood or steel H-frame structures in parallel. Depending on structure type and terrain, structures for each of the lines would be spaced 600 to 1,000 feet apart with 5 to 8 structures per mile. Typical structure heights would range from 60 to 75 feet. In this area, the proposed right-of-way width to accommodate both H-frame lines is expected to be 250 feet.

In the southern portion of the project area near the Milk River valley, the parallel lines would each use single poles instead of H-frame structures to reduce potential land use and visual impacts. These wood or steel poles would be spaced between 400 to 800 feet apart (depending on pole type selected and terrain). For the single pole design, there would be between 6 and 13 structures per mile depending on pole height, typically 70 to 110 feet. Where single poles are proposed, the right-of-way width to accommodate both lines is expected to be 175 feet. Alternative configurations and alignments will be evaluated by the agencies during the environmental review process.

The proposed alignment, proceeding from north to south, crosses the floodplains of several perennial streams including Buggy Creek, Wolf Creek, Crooked Creek, Wire Grass Coulee, Spring Creek, Chapman Creek, the Milk River, and Antelope Creek. A floodplain assessment will be incorporated into this EA, and a statement of findings will be published and distributed as required by DOE floodplain/wetland regulations.

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